

OPPOSE HB-06667 (An Act Addressing Gun Violence)

Dear Judiciary Committee,

I write today asking you to OPPOSE HB-06816, AN ACT CONCERNING MICROSTAMPING-ENABLED PISTOLS, RAISING THE AGE TO PURCHASE AMMUNITION AND RESTRICTING THE SALE AND POSSESSION OF BODY ARMOR.

This bill, which combines three, mostly unrelated measures that are not likely to reduce gun violence in CT. Simply put, microstamping is unlikely to “work as intended” to identify criminals in a shooting for reasons I explain below. Body armor is not a weapon and is used for personal protection and therefore should not be regulated. Ammunition purchases by 18-21 year olds are not a significant source of gun violence and also do not need regulation.

Mircostamping

In essence, this methodology is flawed for several very realistic reasons: Wear and tear on the stamping device and easily defeated, a modicum of effort to ensure spent casings do not get left behind (or using a revolver), a lack of specificity for identifying the shooter, potential issues with fraud/“planting of evidence,” the relative ease of removing the microstamping device, and finally, illegally obtained, black market, and used guns which do not have the stamping device. In addition to a low likelihood of “success,” the added costs of microstamping are likely to most affect those with lower incomes, such as seniors and many people of color - two sets of people who may need the ability to protect themselves the most. This device, which will significantly increase the cost of the firearm, amounts to systemic racism to one of the fastest growing groups of gun owners.

Elaborating on the first point, firearms produce a great deal of pressure and force on a number of firearm parts, so much so that as the gun is fired repeatedly, the wear patterns evolve. A microstamper would not be immune, and would rapidly deteriorate to the point of being useless. Further, the microstamp can be easily defeated in under a minute with common household tools.

A revolver leaves no shell casings, and this is what makes a revolver such as the “.38 Special” a weapon of choice according to the ATF. Catchers exist for many pistols and rifles so that users do not have to pick up spent casings. A \$5 device or even a plastic bag over the gun deprives the police of the evidence to make microstamping effective as evidence.

A microstamp on a casing does not provide definitive evidence of who is the shooter. It may lead police to the last known owner of the gun, but that may not be the person who pulled the trigger or even the current owner of the firearm - person-to-person transfers, lost and stolen guns tend not to have ownership paperwork (Form 4473).

It is also incredibly easy for someone to collect spent casings from another user and sprinkle them around a crime scene. At most ranges, spent casings land ahead of the firing line and become unretrievable. At a competition, spent casings are left all over the course until volunteers pick them up at the end of the match, sometimes digging them out of the gravel. While it sounds like TV drama, there is a very real possibility microstamping leads to more false arrests than cases it helps solve. There certainly are enough loopholes to introduce “reasonable doubt.”

Finally, according to the DOJ, less than 15% of firearms used in crimes were bought at a store. This means that 85% of crimes are committed with ill-gotten firearms - those likely to not have a microstamper or any ownership paperwork.

This bill was proposed in 2009 and failed at that time. What has changed to make it more palatable now? Whether the added cost is \$10 or \$200, if microstamping is unlikely to work and easily defeated or avoided, why encumber most law abiding citizens?

Body Armor

Body armor is not a weapon. While it can protect people intent on causing harm, removing the ability for normal citizens to purchase and utilize it is an egregious limitation of one's right to personal protection. We have a right to protect ourselves from enemies, foreign and domestic.

Raising the legal age to purchase ammunition

If we are going to consider an 18 year old an adult, capable of making decisions on their own, should it not be so for any such decision? These people can be enlisted to war, forced to fight and die for theirs and others' freedom that they don't even have themselves! Cigarettes, vapes, and alcohol can only be purchased legally by those aged 21 years and older. Underage smoking, vaping, and drinking is therefore not a problem. How well is that working?! The answer is that underage kids are getting their hands on it anyway. The purchase of ammunition among 18-21 year olds is NOT a problem, but the reason you need to make these laws is to prove to constituents that you are gun control advocates ahead of re-election.

In summary, these three laws will not reduce gun violence. They do nothing to eliminate the two major sources of gun violence - suicide and gang/drug related murder. One (microstamping) is proven to not be workable for a whole host of reasons both technological and practical. It will raise the cost and make it more difficult to obtain a firearm. Another measure (prohibiting body armor) eliminates an individual's right to protect themselves, and the last (raising the legal age to purchase ammunition) will do nothing to solve gun violence, but will limit legal, of-age individuals from exercising their Constitutionally guaranteed rights. These laws simply amount to another form of gun control, and should not be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Girard